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the cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia and

Baltimore.

Book and Job Printing

PROMPTLY AND NEATLY EXECUTED.

THE STORY TELLER.

COTTIN.

THE WANDERING HOMICIDE.

BY WILLIAM COMSTOCK.

Some years ago, when one of the American

frigates was lying at Callao, the port of Lima,

she was visited by a man whose presence created

no little sensation on board. It was Sunday.

Divine service had just been concluded, and

the sailors were lounging about in different parts

of the vessel, reading, sewing, and conversing.

When several canoes were observed paddling

off from the shore. This was nothing remarkable,

as visitors frequently came on board, after un-

dergoing a search by the Master at Arms, the

object of which was to prevent the introduction

of liquor to the crew. The ship's company, as

is common in such cases, crowded around the

gangway to see the new comers on board. There

were four in all, but not much notice was taken

of any but the last. He was a man, apparently

thirty-five years of age. His dress and general

appearance were those of a "beach-ringer," a

class of sailors who dwell on shore, and earn a

precarious livelihood, by sometimes working on

board the merchant vessel—pumping, gambling,

and stealing. But the crew of the frigate

evinced more dislike at his presence than could

have been created by an ordinary stranger.

While they received the other visitors kindly

and cordially, they made way for this man, and

no one attempted to speak to him, until he had

reached the fore-castle, where he stood looking

around upon the crowd like an object foreign

to the scene. Soldiers were not far off, and

there must have been something extremely

objectionable in his appearance to induce them

to treat him with such marked hostility.

The green hands shuddered as they surveyed

him, and the old man-of-war's men, familiar with

crime from their infancy, and hardened by suf-

fering and danger, shrank from his side like in-

nocent children on the approach of a fiend.

He seemed, in part, to enter the fearful interest

which excited; but still the expression of his

countenance was that of irrepressible won-

der. His eyes were frequently cast down, and his

under lip slightly wrinkled, like a person suffer-

ing and endeavoring to hide, internal agonies.

There was a certain *abandonment* in his man-

ner of walking, and in his every motion.

His swimming, or rather unsteady, gait, his

upper lip, which gave an easy, reckless cast

to the eye, which was, however, overruled by

the gloominess of his other features.

"Cottin is on board!" was murmured in an

under tone from stem to stern of the ship, and

in a few moments he was surrounded by the

whole of the crew. He made several attempts

to speak, but whatever happened to catch his

eyes, moved immediately away, and he became

silent. At length, one of the hands, a tall In-

dian, said to have once been a pirate, opened a

conversation with him. They mutually be-
came acquainted, and he became a

very communicative.

"Don't you recollect," said he, "when you

picked me up at sea on my fifth raft? I set

out all alone, made a sail of my handkerchief,

and in real dread-nought fashion, started for the

land. I was out three days, but felt no more

concerned about myself than if I had been fly-

ing snug in my hammock."

"You looked pretty well fagged out, though,

when you came on board," replied the Indian.

protested their innocence, and declared that the

white men who dwelt among them were much

more addicted to mischievous practices than the

natives themselves. They also pointed out this

Cottin as a man of very suspicious character.

They said that he came from beyond the moun-

tains; that no one knew him; that he never did

any work, and boarded no where. Yet the man

always had a little money, and was sometimes

quite liberal in the disposal of it. With the in-

consideration common to most sailors, several

of them at once went in search of Cottin. He

was found in a pulperie, drinking with one of

the frigate's boys. A tall, active seaman, from

Kentucky, collared him without preface, and

dashed the liquor from his hands. A young

boarder at the same moment gave him a blow

on the head with a long stick, which brought him

to the floor. The Kentucky then seized the

prostrate man with his teeth, and tore his flesh

more cruelly. Cottin screamed in agony, and

exclaimed, "O! let me alone, and I will do no

more murder!" This was considered a confession

of the alleged crime, and several of the

frigate's men fell upon the wretched sufferer,

and would doubtless have despatched him, but

for the interference of others. The master of

the house drew a long sword, and assailed the

man-of-war's men so vigorously that they were

obliged to leave Cottin in order to defend them-

selves. Cottin sprang on his feet, and escaped

through a back window. He was seen running

along the street with a stream of blood gush-

ing from his principal wound. Of course, the au-

thorities took the part of the runner, and the

seaman retired. Although thus baffled in their

attempts to kill Cottin, the frigate's crew laid

undergoing a search by the Master at Arms, the

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picked me up at sea on my fifth raft? I set

out all alone, made a sail of my handkerchief,

and in real dread-nought fashion, started for the

length quickened her pace nearly to a run, and

then the young man demanded why she traveled

so fast.

"I," cried she, and her eyes seemed to

flush with triumph—"can't the Yankee walk as

fast as a woman?" Then waving her arm au-

thoritatively, she spoke in a commanding tone,

which the midshipman could hardly brook.

"Come on! Come on!"

"How much farther are you going?" said he.

No answer was returned this time, and the

young man kept close to the heels of the

conductor. The trampling of horses' hoofs was

heard, but at so great a distance that he knew

he was as much as a mile from the highway.

The town was full three times as distant. The

woman now plunged down the side of a steep

hill, and led the youth into a thick, dark wood.

The thought of Cottin now forcibly obtruded

itself upon his mind, and the excited blood of

the young man now poured into his cheeks.

But Cottin was a poor, miserable vagabond,

and could not be acquainted with the woman,

or, if acquainted, could exercise no influence

over her. The walking became bad. The bushes

and thorns caught in his clothes, and he

was obliged to force his way through them with

painful effort. "Tell me how much farther I must go,"

exclaimed the midshipman impatiently, and jerking

his point from his bosom.

"Have you any money?" cried the woman

abruptly, and falling a little back until she came

abreast of the youth.

"Money?" cried he—lifting his dagger in a

threatening manner—"have you brought me

here to rob me?"

"No," said she, shrinking a little back; "but

you do not intend to put me to all this trouble

without paying me?"

"This very natural and characteristic demand

nearly spoiled the romance of the adventure, in

the eyes of the young man, and taking out a

dollar, he presented it to the woman, saying pe-

tisally, "Here is your pay. I suppose I've come

for nothing after all. But where is this Roby?"

"I wish I was sure in my hammock."

"Is the Yankee blind?" said the woman.

Mr. Blunt turned and saw a man at his elbow,

peering through a clump of underwood, at him.

The woman withdrew.

"So—is your name Roby?" said the officer.

"What name please to be your business with

me, sir?" demanded the other.

"This is a strange place I find you in, re-

turned the midshipman, feeling rather unpleas-

antly. "I do not know what my honest man

can be doing in this lonesome and almost inacces-

sible place at this time of night."

"Why are you here?" returned Roby; "then I much

wonder at your being caught here. Mr. Blunt,

since you have heretofore enjoyed the reputation

of being an honest man."

"You know my name?" said the other, hastily.

"Very probably," said Roby; "and you fur-

ther name too. I have traveled in old Virginia,

and I have seen slaves hung there, sir—and

came very near being hung by your father, my-

self, sir."

"Is this Stewart?" cried Blunt.

"That is one of the names that I go by, sir—

there's nothing in a name, sir. But, speaking

of hanging, sir, I was actually one of the plot-

ters of that insurrection, and have left a train

behind me that will explode before you see

me again."

"Wretch!" cried Blunt, "I wish I had you

at home, now."

"What would you do?" calmly inquired the

other, coming out of the bushes and placing

himself in front of the youth.

"Put this dagger to the hilt in your cursed

carcass!" exclaimed Blunt.

"Was that what you came here for?" said

Roby.

"No," returned the officer; "but time wears

away, and you are in your fellow-prisoner in

the calaboose."

"Well, I give you credit, young man," said

Roby; "I honor your spirit, if you have come

into the woods alone and single-handed to look

for Cottin."

"You notice he's very brave where women

only, are concerned—replied the other—his

threats vengeance to the lady who conducted

him hither."

"O, yes," said Roby, "petticoat warriors are

peculiarly adapted to the young gentlemen who

parade a frigate's quarter-deck in fine weather."

The young Virginian gnashed his teeth, and

was about retorting harshly, when he felt the

weapon pressed rather uncomfortably against his

jeans, and prudence mastered his indignation.

Blunt was very talkative when he first arrived,

and another, but now he is as patient as a lamb.

This image shows a blank, aged, cream-colored page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf of a book. The paper has a slightly textured appearance with some minor discoloration and creases. A dark, irregular stain is visible along the left edge, possibly from the binding or a previous owner. The page is otherwise empty of text or illustrations.

